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REVIEW

WALSH'S THE CLIMAX OF CIVILIZATION: SOCIALISM; AND FEMINISM¹

THESE three books may not improperly be called volumes I, II, and III, of the same work. In the preface to volume I the author says:

Standing by itself, the present work is offered as a new exposition of the cyclical theory in the philosophy of history. It attempts to describe the course which all civilisations naturally run, and to locate our position in the cycle of our civilisation. This position is shown to be one near the top, or climax, and to contain premonitions of disintegration and decline. The purpose of the work is to point out these germs of decay, and to emphasize the need of guarding against fomenting and cherishing them. The two most comprehensive sources of trouble are the subjects of the two succeeding works.

The symptoms of our near approach to the climax, or of our having already passed it, the author observes from seven points of view, namely: (1) the military art; (2) economics; (3) population; (4) morality; (5) the fine arts, literature and jurisprudence; (6) religion, and (7) government. In each field of activity he observes, at least among peoples who have amounted to anything, a regular cycle from the strenuous, heroic, and masculine virtues of primitive life, up through conditions of power and prosperity, followed by the feminine virtues of softness, gentleness, sympathy and elegance, and then downward through enervation, ease, unwillingness to endure hardship, overconsumption, and decay.

In the field of economics, his cycle reminds one of E. V. Robinson's remark that when production exceeds consumption, there is progress; when consumption exceeds produc-

¹ The Climax of Civilization, pp. 150, \$1.25; Socialism, pp. 169, \$1.50; Feminism, pp. 393, \$2.50. By Correa Moylan Walsh. New York, Sturgis and Walton. 1917.

tion, there is retrogression;¹ tho he goes more into detail. In the field of morals he says, page 31 of volume I:

Because of the need at first of contention, the virtues most dwelt upon, when intelligent observation was turned toward them, were the masculine virtues of fortitude, temperance, wisdom, and justice. But with the advent of the long peace and the coming into prominence of women, taking the place of those stern virtues another set of mild ones come to the fore — the feminine virtues of patience, purity, faith, and affection.

Again, on pages 32 and 33:

By now the old intuitive morality has given way before a rationalising science of ethics, which, rejecting the old stand-by's as too rough, experiments with all sorts of new theories, and even with many which experience has long ago disproved. More attention is paid to the welfare of individuals than to the welfare of the whole society or race, and still less to its perpetuation, especially if each individual believes himself immortal. . . . Accompanying this change come new ideas about a general equality of the sexes; for women are equal to men in the point of view now emphasized — the capacity to enjoy and to consume. . . . With the breaking down of competition, there is less striving within each state as well as between states, until at last, with the diminution of production, especially if accompanied by exhaustion of the sources, a new period of hard times sets in, which generates strife again, but finds the more civilised peoples mostly unfit for it, and most likely to give way before the less civilised.

The author finds that feminism is only a part of socialism, tho he says that: "Feminism may be advocated without socialism — without the whole of which it is a part."

The significance of these volumes, however, is not to be found in the views they set forth, but in the wealth of learning and the discriminating judgment which they display. The author shows himself to be a real student, with a penetrating mind which can see through the ordinary claptrap of popular philosophy which has, unfortunately, sometimes been imported into the proceedings of learned societies.

The appearance of a cycle of growth and decay in national as in the individual life has long been a puzzle. There seems

¹ Cf. "War and Economics," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. xv, p. 581.

to be no such physical necessity for the decay of a civilization as is found for the decay of a biological organism, but there are undoubted tendencies in the same direction. The very success of a race or a nation in building up a civilization seems to predispose it toward those habits which necessarily bring decay. The individual who has, by hard work and frugality, built up a fortune by producing more than he consumes will be difficult to convince that he should not stop working and begin to enjoy what he has accumulated. The difficulty will be increased with each generation of his heirs. Yet, nothing is more mathematically certain than the conclusion that if they do yield to this temptation, their consumption will soon exceed their production. If this tendency shows itself in the nation at large, it is equally certain that national wealth will thenceforward decline.

Again, even tho there are multitudes of people left in a state of poverty, the sight of so much wealth in the possession of other people will lead them to consider the cold-blooded question whether it would not be more profitable to try to rob them than to work for themselves. The sight of a conspicuously rich territorial group has never failed to arouse the cupidity of neighboring groups, provided the latter were strong enough to attempt inroads. Similarly, the sight of a conspicuously rich class does not fail to arouse an equal cupidity in the minds of other classes in the same territory whenever the latter feel strong enough to defy the laws of the land and make incursions over the class border. They who do not understand or appreciate this tendency in human nature will never have a very full understanding of the social problems of the present day. A careful reading of these three volumes should help the reader to such an understanding.

T. N. CARVER.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY.